

Camp Sill, Jan 2 1862

Dearest Daughter,

I wholly forgot to whom my last home letter was addressed. I believe it was to your mother. So this to you. I have nothing new to say of myself – except that I have been so unwell, feverish and in pain from my wound, that I was on the verge of asking sick-leave, when Maj. Phillips came. Yesterday and the day before (the day after Genl McCook left) I was especially sick. The Dr thought I was tending to typhoid fever. But I think the danger has passed and I am of an upward tendency again- as the Commercial lists have it. My wound, however, kept me awake last night by extreme tenderness and pain without being seriously hurt. There seems to be a periodicity in it. It is very small, but like an Irishman's pig very active in the count. I confess great disgust at it.

I sent to you and Belle my suit of clothes, "marred as you see by the traitors" – with the bullet, that hit me on the hip. But Anderson luck reviving- they were stolen from the hold at Nashville as Mr. Sutphin went into Breakfast. I confess myself really vexed and sorry at this misadventure – since nothing else but the holes – aligned- could show the wondrous escape of the wearer and they seem also likely to be the only legacy, I can send or bring my children out of this – holy war. At least it looks as if I were never to have any of my pay to send home. I think it quite likely now unless Uncle Barr can persuade Col. Tilton and Dick Thruston (whilst at home) to give you and get me proper receipts for the muskets and accoutrements I left at Camp Dayton, that I shall be brought in debt to the government instead of it to me. So much for patriotism. Tilton however offered to receipt for them without count. I had not time then- and when the hour and minute came- dispatch on dispatch – The Col. Was not there and I was compelled to stack and pile every thing at the Guard House – tell the Col. Of it and flurry off to the Rail Road and to Richmond as a Regt!

Here things are as one might expect. Rumors of the enemy having retreated to Fayetteville and also of their being greatly reinforced by Longstreet. We are also being much reinforced. So that it is not unreasonable to expect another great Battle though I do not think there is any such expectation in the Army, or care over it if there is. Indeed I am quite amazed at the indifference of the Army as to its own fate or fortunes. For example, General Rosecrans was told, the other day, that there was the greatest excitement in the Right wing about his Louisville Journal Dispatch – implied by censuring it – especially among the Cols. Whilst I saw no excitement wither amongst Colonels- except two and that was helped by whiskey- nor men. This, by no means implies that the public opinion of our Division, was or was not with the General commanding in this report. Though I rather think the opinion was then common in the Division, even, that it was a surprise. Though that opinion did not necessarily censure Genl Johnson perhaps- certainly not Genl. McCook. For the two most vigilant Brigadiers almost in the Army had been placed in this critical point. What more could he do? However, I never heard of Genl McCook's having been censured- Notwithstanding my own first opinion, that it was a surprise, and that I chanced to know its origin- as the light breaks. I am now inclined to believe, that we were simply overwhelmed by superior numbers, thrown with sudden and excellent strategy upon our weakest \* point of men.\*strong as a place – i.e. if held by correspondent forces. It may be, that, with my certain belief in the almost universal superiority of their Generals. I am at the lookout, in each case, for superior

Generalship. But , I think not. Per example, that general opinion of mine, does not prevent me, after seeing and admitting the admirable plan of their attack, from the certain belief, that if they had not unaccountably failed in vigor in the following it up. They would have swept us all from the face of the earth, or captured every body and thing not destroyed. Our retreat was thing out of the question. I am not so sure however, that this excellence of their plan, necessarily betokens a want of excellence in ours. Their certainly may be two good generals, opposed to each other. Though one would never believe that possibility in reading or hearing accounts of our battles. Nor does success on the one side, prove “superiority” over the other. A little good fortune, may kick the evenly balanced beam, or against the preponderance of skill. So come to our case. With the doubts, proper to my modesty in this new business – I think our Wing – our Division at least – was too far out. It had not Reserves – supports- for such a distance from the other wings – more strongly-safety placed. The River protected Crittenden’s left flank the same and Crittenden and Cedar Thickets protected Thomas (Rousseau). The open fields and Air were our only right shield. Were too much “in the Air” –out of doors. In plain English- unless we had intended to begin the attack ourselves- our positioning was, by no means, compact enough. The result was, as it was- whether from being surprised or overwhelmed, matters nothing. If not surprised no- no troop veteran ever saw, ever did, or ever will, fight visible, overwhelming numbers, without a sense- a feeling of security in the support of flank and rear. If they do not feel the want of active help, they want- must have an idea of solid rest, or safe retreat, in case of Retreat. And if things do not feel solid safe; if they begin to float-, swim-, fly in these vague sensations – the bodily organs will soon do the same – waver-, tremble-, break-, run! I think consequently, that we – somebody- did wrong (after having so placed the Right Wing) in the first making or feigning an Attack. Two of those barricades were then complete, in case of actual attack, we would have been slaughtered like sheep, in the shambles. And if they left their barricades to attack us, their Genls were the veriest fools on earth. Taken altogether; we all got out of the snap remarkably well – if not wonder (rest of letter missing)